



Religious Perspectives on Euthanasia: A Comparative Analysis

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Theoretical Study

Abstract

Background: This article argues the various religious views on euthanasia. After that, a comparison will be done to see where euthanasia is permitted or not. The main aim of doing this paper is to see whether in the age of artificial intelligence still the religious beliefs are against euthanasia or there is any change.

Methods: The theoretical study was used in this paper in order to find out the say of the various religions on euthanasia.

Results: None of the religions permitted euthanasia. The judicial opinion that is reflected in various judgements of the Supreme Court of India allowing passive euthanasia was indeed against the religious beliefs of India. The article analysed various judgements of Supreme Court of India on the legalisation of euthanasia.

Conclusion: As euthanasia is allowed in Common Cause Case, even right to die with dignity is given without considering any religion. Therefore, still in India, there is no law because it is not acceptable by any religion. Thus, there is a need to bring changes as per the religious sentiments, because it is very difficult to bring it in practice as it is against the culture of the society.

Keywords: Euthanasia; Religious perspective; India; Right to die with dignity

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Introduction

Euthanasia has become a debatable issue not only locally but nationally as well due to the variety of factors that influence people's ethics in India. Only a handful of countries have given the right to the patient to choose how to die in cases of terminal illness. Euthanasia is a very complicated topic that entails many diverse ideals and religious beliefs. This is a situation that could happen to anyone, not necessarily to a family with an elderly person involved. At any age level, person can become a victim of such circumstances due to an accident, disease, illness, etc. (Goudapannavar, 2013). It becomes particularly controversial when there is a child involved or somebody who has lost the ability to make their own decisions regarding their lives or condition. In the era of modern facility and scientific technique advancement; now we should enlarge the scope of article 21 by including death with dignity in article 21 (Singh, 2002). Health care professionals consistently are faced with euthanasia issues. There are numerous factors that influence peoples' sentiments regarding euthanasia from both the standpoint of the medical profession and from a family's point of view. These factors incorporate religious beliefs along with degree of religiosity, age of the individual on death bed and age of the family members who are making the decisions, level of education which may impact their comprehension of what euthanasia is, past experience involving cases of painful dying of a terminally ill patient, and family environment (Singh, 1995). Euthanasia involves not only a decision by the family but also a decision by the doctor who is requested to perform it. The physician will have his/her own personal ideals and beliefs regarding euthanasia and the factors listed above would likewise be included in the physician's decision making. The proficiency of modern medical practice to prolong life through technological means has incited the question of what courses of action should be available to the physician and the family in instances of extreme physical or emotional suffering, especially if the patient is incapable of choice. Inactively doing nothing to prolong life or withdrawing life-support measures has led to criminal allegations being brought up against physicians; on the other hand, the families of comatose and terminal patients have initiated legal action against the medical establishment to make them stop the use of extraordinary life support for the survival (Bakhshi, 2002)..

Definition: "Euthanasia" literally means mercy killing. The term "euthanasia" has been derived from Greek ancient words: 'eu' which means 'good', and 'thanatos' which is a Greek word that means 'death'; thus, it is regarded as the effortless termination of life of an unbearably suffering patient by the physician upon the patient report. Euthanasia is an act or exercise where a person suffering from any life-threatening disease resorts to, in order to end his/her sufferings or to relieve him/her of the pain or the sickness by the means of an injection or with the aid of suspension of the medical treatment. It is characterized by putting an end to a life by a deliberate act or omission on part of a person who has the feeling that the life is not worth living anymore (Shukla, 2002). It is otherwise called 'mercy killing', which is an act where the person who has no odds of survival as he/she is enduring a difficult time chooses to put an end to his/her life in a painless way (Singh, 2002). In this manner, it may very well be said that euthanasia is the purposeful and deliberate ending of one's life by an act of infusion of some medicine or inability to provide simple medical care with the purpose of discharging the individual from a difficult life.

Methods

The theoretical study was used in this paper in order to find out the say of the various religions on euthanasia.

Classification of euthanasia

Euthanasia is usually undertaken as an individual seeks relief and requests it, but yet there can be cases called euthanasia wherein any individual cannot make such a request. Generally, euthanasia can be categorized into three types on the basis of consent under the following heads (Singh, 2002) voluntary euthanasia, non-voluntary euthanasia, involuntary euthanasia.

Voluntary euthanasia: It means killing at the request of a person killed which is to be distinguished from 'non-voluntary euthanasia', where the person killed is not capable of either making or refusing to make such a request. In cases concerning voluntary euthanasia, the request must come from a person who is either in intolerable pain or who is suffering from an illness which is established as being terminal death Bakhshi, 2012. In either case, it must not result from any pressure from family members or those who have the patients in their care. Both active and passive euthanasia can be characterized as forms of voluntary euthanasia.

Non-voluntary euthanasia: Non-voluntary euthanasia is conducted when the consent is not available. It involves the death of a person who cannot express any views on the matter and who must use some sort of proxy requests. It may happen in case of patients who have not addressed in their wills or given advanced indications about their desire of dying. It differs from involuntary euthanasia, when euthanasia is performed against the will of the patient (Griffithes, Weyers & Adams, 2008).

Involuntary euthanasia: Involuntary euthanasia is completely a different concept, wherein the patient is not in a condition to explicitly request for assistance in dying or to permanently relieve him from the intolerable pain. It includes ending the patient's life in the absence of either a personal or proxy invitation to do so. The motive in both voluntary and involuntary euthanasia is the same - the release from suffering, but what differs is the request to die or the decision to terminate the life. This is applicable for the patients who are in a persistent vegetative state (PVS), the state in which the patient becomes a complete vegetable, loses all his physical and mental capacities, but is biologically alive Bakhshi, 2012. In such a state, there is no hope of recovery or even probably the individual may never recover his consciousness.

Religious views on euthanasia

Hinduism: There are two Hindu methodologies on euthanasia. It is a double-edged sword. By helping to end a painful life, a person is doing a good deed and thus fulfilling their moral obligations. On the other hand, interfering with life and death of a third person is inhuman, which is a bad deed. However, the same contention suggests that keeping a person artificially alive on a life-support system would also be an appalling thing to do. Hinduism does not advocate actions promoting death of a person. According to Hinduism, euthanasia is not an act of sin, but the myths and issues attached with the life Most Hindus would state that a specialist ought not to acknowledge a patient's solicitation for killing since this will make the spirit and body is isolated at an unnatural time. The outcome will harm the karma of both specialist and patient. In any case, a few Hindus express that by assisting with completion a difficult life, an individual is playing out a decent deed thus satisfying their ethical commitments. Govardana and Kulluka, while composing editorials on Manu, say that a man may attempt the mahaparasthana (extraordinary takeoff) on an excursion which finishes in death when he is hopelessly unhealthy or meets with an incredible disaster, and that, it is not against Vedic standards which preclude self-destruction (Pawankaur, 2014). There are two Hindu perspectives on willful

extermination: by assisting with completion of an excruciating life, an individual is playing out a decent deed, thus satisfying their ethical commitments. By assisting with completion of an actual existence, even one loaded up with anguish, an individual is upsetting the planning of the pattern of death and resurrection. This is a terrible activity, and those engaged with the killing will assume the rest of the karma of the patient. A similar contention recommends that keeping an individual misleadingly alive on a life-supporting tool would likewise be a criminal activity. In any case, the utilization of an actual existence bolster machine as a feature of an impermanent endeavor at recuperating would not be an awful thing (Kasliwal, 2002). The perfect demise is a cognizant passing, and this implies that palliative medications will be an issue on the off chance that they diminish mental readiness.

Islam: Muslims are agnostic euthanasia. They accept that all human life is holy since it is given by Allah, and that Allah picks to what extent every individual will live. People ought not to meddle in this. Life is consecrated, and the act of euthanasia in Islam considered as slaughtering, and it can only be taken by Allah. In the event that anybody executes an individual - except if it be for homicide or spreading fiendishness in the land - it would be as though he slaughtered the entire people. Suicide and willful extermination are unequivocally taboo: "Demolish not you. Without a doubt Allah is ever tolerant to you". They believe that how long each person lives is decided by Allah because human life is given by Allah and it is considered sacred (Qadri, 2000). These divine powers must not be interfered with by human beings. The precious and sacred life should not be terminated by human beings by their own willingness and it is a strict obligation on their part to follow this. Euthanasia and suicide are explicitly forbidden: "As per the preaching, if you restrain from committing such a disgraceful act, Allah will be merciful and forgiving". Islamic teachings say: Allah will choose to end life when, how and where, as according to it, life is precious and sacred. It is not right to interfere in god work, and in any religion, the process of euthanasia is not approved (Sarabjet, 2008).

Christianity: Catholic teaching denounces euthanasia as a "crime against life" and a "crime against God". The teaching of the Catholic Church on euthanasia rests on several core virtues of Catholic ethics, including the sanctity of human life, the dignity of individual, concomitant human rights, due proportionality in casuistic remedies, the unavailability of death, and the significance of charity. Christians are for the most part against killing. The contentions are generally founded on the contention that life is a blessing from God and that individuals are made in God's picture. Birth and passing are a piece of the existence forms which God has made; thus, we should regard them. In this manner, no individual has the power to end the life of any guiltless individual, regardless of whether that individual is suffering (Dharanishree & Kumar 2017).

Buddhism: There are mixed views among Buddhists on the issue of euthanasia; most are critical of the concept. Compassion is a respected virtue of Buddhist teachings. It is used by some Buddhists as a justification for euthanasia because the individual suffering is relieved of pain. However, it is still unethical "to embark on any course of action whose aim is to destroy human life, irrespective of the quality of the individual's intention". In Theravada Buddhism, a lay person daily recites the simple formula: "I recognize the precept to abstain from destroying living being" (Saikia, 2010). Thus, it is reasonable to presume that this opposition to euthanasia also applies to physician-assisted death and other forms of assisted suicide.

Sikhism: Sikhs get their morals to a great extent from the lessons of their sacred

writing, Guru Granth Sahib, and the Sikh Code of Conduct (The Rehat Maryada). The Sikh Gurus dismissed self-destruction (and by expansion, killing) as an obstruction in God's arrangement. Enduring, they stated, was a piece of the activity of karma, and individuals ought acknowledge it without objection and act in order to make the best of the circumstance that karma has given them. Each individual has a right to live and appreciate the products of life till his last breath (Pamelpreet, 2010). Yet, now and again, an individual is not allowed to take his life by utilization of unnatural methods. To take one's life in an unnatural manner is an indication of variation from the norm. At the point when an individual finishes his life by his own demonstration, we call it "self-destruction". To end life of an individual by others on the solicitation of the expired is classified "willful extermination" or "kindness slaughtering" (Pamelpreet, 2010).

Jainism: Mahavira Varadhmana explicitly allows a shravak (follower of Jainism) full consent to put an end to his or her life if the shravak feels that such a stage would lead to moksha. Salvation can be achieved through self-sacrifice. There is a ritual that considers voluntary death as legal under Jain religion, and that is called Santhara. The word Santhara means 'a way of life' and it includes 'a way of dying' as well. In Jainism, the human body is taken as a provisional residence of the soul which takes rebirth in another human being's body. It is a ritual of faith for millions, even though it may seem strange. Many Indians go on fasting to death in a ritual called Santhara every year. This religion preaches the path of harmlessness and renunciation which a human being should follow if one wants to achieve moksha. Moksha means the liberation of the soul from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Such liberation of the soul which can be achieved through Santhara or Smadhi, i.e., fasting till death, is what the followers of Jainism believe in (Jain, 2004).

Comparative analysis

After discussing the various religious perspectives on euthanasia in the previous section, it can be concluded that no religion supports the practice of ending oneself life without any reason and it is not permissible in any religion. Every religion teaches that life is a gift from God that should only be taken by God. As a result, everyone's birth and death times are predetermined by God, and humans are not permitted to tamper with any of the Creator's natural processes. If someone interferes with God's natural processes, their soul will not go to a nice place after they die and will instead be plagued. In Hindu, it is believed that life is a sacred thing, which can be ended by God only. In Islam, the same perspective can be seen as Allah is the only creator of men's life. The same view has been taken in Sikhism. However, in Jainism, Santhara is allowed only when there is no chance of survival. Therefore, it can be concluded that none of the religions allowed euthanasia even in the age of medical advancement.

Judicial view on euthanasia

The new dimension in Indian history was taken by the Judiciary in Aruna Shanbaug case where it was held that euthanasia could be legalized, but the laws would have to be very stringent. Every case will have to be carefully monitored taking into consideration the point of views of the patient, the relatives, and the doctors. But whether Indian society is mature enough to face this, as it is a matter of life and death, is yet to be seen. And in Common Cause Case, right to die with dignity is allowed with certain guidelines. For detached willful extermination in India, assent by patient, life partner, and youngsters is adequate though whenever agreed by close relative, companion, as well as specialist, it requires endorsement from High Court to parliament sanctions laws (Mishra, 2020).

Conclusion

In a country like India which is the land of different religions and cultures, every law of the land is governed by the religious belief of the people, and only that law is accepted by the people of India. After doing comparison, it is found that euthanasia is not allowed in any religion. In every culture, there is a belief that life is a pure thing. It is a gift of God and can only be taken by God. Any interference in the natural process will lead to destruction. According to the Aruna Ramchandra Shanbaug case judgement, Indian conditions are suitable for passive euthanasia in certain special circumstances, such as those in the case of brain-dead patients or patient on a PVS. In Common Cause Case, the judgement is against the religious sentiment of the people. As euthanasia is allowed, even right to die with dignity is given without considering any religion. Therefore, still in India, there is no law because it is very difficult to bring it in practice as it is against the culture of the society.

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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None.

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